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PRIORITY THEMES

DEVELOPMENT: INTEGRATION OF WOMEN IN THE PROCESS OF DEVELOPMENT; WOMEN AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Statement submitted by the following non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council: American Association of Retired Persons (category II)

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is circulated in accordance with paragraphs 29 and 30 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1296 (XLIV) of 23 May 1968.

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1. The American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) would like to express its appreciation to the Division for the Advancement of Women for the successful and extremely fruitful collaboration in the organization of the Expert Group Meeting on the Integration of Ageing and Elderly Women in Development, which took place from 7 to 11 October 1991 in Vienna. The Expert Group Meeting, the first to focus specifically on older women, was attended by 11 experts from different regions of the world, and representatives of Governments, of the United Nations system and of research institutes as well as of 21 non-governmental organizations concerned with the advancement of women and older persons.

2. The AARP applauds the findings and recommendations of the Expert Group Meeting. In particular, it would like to highlight the following points on which there was a clear consensus: (a) unless women become aware and are enabled to take steps at younger ages and throughout their life to provide for their own economic security, health and participation in society, they will remain especially vulnerable to poverty, disease and isolation in later years; (b) although women continue to suffer significant disadvantages and inequalities throughout their life, particularly in the areas of education, training, employment and access to adequate nutrition and health care, the vast majority of older women continue to make significant economic, social,

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cultural and political contributions to the development of their societies; and (c) due to the lack of adequate data documenting the living conditions of older women and measuring their contributions in economic terms, the work of older women and, indeed, older women themselves remain largely invisible to economists and policy makers.

3. To remedy this situation and help to improve the lives of current and future generations of older women, the Expert Group Meeting adopted by consensus a series of recommendations. Specifically, the AARP strongly recommends that the Commission on the Status of Women should take action now on the recommendations of the Expert Group Meeting. The issues dealt with by the Expert Working Group are summed up below.

4. Benefits from development planning and projects should accrue to women throughout their entire life. Planning targeted at young women should take the longer term perspective of the impact that decisions at younger ages have over the life-course. This longer term perspective should, in particular, take into account the goals of economic security, full participation in society and the reduction of morbidity at older ages. International development agencies, Governments and non-governmental organizations should include women at older ages as equal participants in all development projects.

5. Data on the current and projected situation of older women need to be improved and expanded. Unless more is known of the current living circumstances of older women and more accurate projections are made regarding their levels of education, skills, training, health status and financial resources, it will be difficult to maximize the use of scarce resources by accurately targeting policies and programmes. We welcome the initiative taken by the Division for the Advancement of Women to design a standard profile on the current and projected situation of older women and pledge our continued support to this effort. To make this initiative truly successful, we urge that this approach receive the active support of Governments and the assistance of international donor agencies.

6. We recognize and applaud the considerable work already undertaken by the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women, the United Nations Statistical Office and the International Labour Organisation, as well as other international and national bodies with regard to evaluating women's work in areas that are usually recognized as economic. The contributions of older women in the home, in the fields, in the family and in the community are most often overlooked or undervalued. We therefore urge the above-mentioned organizations to ensure that the total economic contributions of women, including those of older women, are quantified and included in the System of National Accounts.

7. A particularly intractable problem, even in countries where there is legislation against age discrimination, as is the case in the United States of America, is the issue of de facto discrimination and negative stereotyping based on age. Women are especially vulnerable because age discrimination is often combined with gender discrimination. The AARP therefore urges that the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women give particular attention to discrimination based on age when reviewing national reports on the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

8. In conclusion, the AARP reiterates that the above-mentioned recommendations of the Expert Group Meeting represent important milestones in the development of strategies for the advancement of not only older women but also women of all ages. We consequently urge that these important recommendations be incorporated in the planning and implementation of all future activities for the advancement of women, in particular the Fourth World Conference on Women: Action for Equality, Development and Peace (1995).